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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM
YEAR TO YEAR."

All the Year Round

a
Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

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SATURDAY, JANUARY 6, 1872.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

THE WICKED WOODS OF TOBEREEVIL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HESTER'S HISTORY."

CHAPTER VIII. THE WOODS BECKON.

FIVE years have passed since Paul Finiston sailed away with the Liverpool captain. Many changes have taken place of course. For instance, May is a woman, and Aunt Martha has begun to wear spectacles. The rose-hedges at Monasterlea have grown thicker between the garden and the tombstones, and the grave of Father Felix has got a handsome cross. But no events have happened of more importance than these.

The miser of Tobereevil is still a mystery of iniquity to the people who starve in their cabins to pay him the rents which he extorts. He looks a little more shadowy and ragged than ever as he glides about his grounds, rubbing his lean hands, and looking nervously over his shoulder. People who speak to him say he is more irascible than he used to be; but these are few besides old Tibbie, Con the fool, and a saturnine lawyer who appears at proper intervals to collect the rents. Con is often at Tobereevil. He picks a bone over the ashes with Tibbie in the kitchen, and sleeps on some straw in a corner. He is the only company old Simon will tolerate of an evening, but it is true that the miser likes to see him sitting chattering his idiot's speech on one of the old oaken chairs opposite his own, or, still better, performing antics in the middle of the floor. Perhaps it is because any other visitor would require some kind of entertainment in the way of food, or drink, or fring, and yet that the miser must sometimes see a friend. But Tibbie will tell us

that Con has a right to come and go at Tobereevil. Con is her sister's son, and he is also, she says, the nephew of old Simon. It is a fact that there was a third brother, who lived and died in poverty at the other end of Ireland. While Con was a child Tibbie appeared at Tobereevil with the gibbering urchin by the hand, and told her story to every one who met her. Some laughed at her, and others believed her, but none knew whether she could substantiate her claim. At all events she engaged to be the miser's housekeeper, and in this hungry situation she has remained ever since. And Con comes and goes, and lives about the country. Tibbie will tell us that he will inherit Tobereevil, having full as good a right as the son of that fine captain and his madam who came spying here once. And she asks eager questions of the lawyer, who nods his head gravely in her witchlike face, and—perhaps being afraid of her, as he now and then passes nights at Tobereevil—does not dash her hopes. As for Con himself, his fool's wits carry no knowledge of the matter. All he knows of the miser is that he hates him with an instinctive hate and fear, mixed with a certain fascination which draws the poor lad to Tobereevil, and prevents his daring to run away when it pleases old Simon to call him to his presence. He sits gazing uneasily in the old man's eyes, like a bird charmed by a hawk. But he also has a curious dread of letting the miser perceive his disgust. When urged to amuse him he does so with the most boisterous of frolics. No man in his senses could so cleverly hide an agony of terror under gambols of wild mirth. Con lives so much among the people that their wrongs are rankling in his heart; and though he may not be wise enough to

understand all things, yet he knows the sound of a curse when he hears it. And he has certain ideas linked inseparably in his mind: curses and sorrow, and the name of Simon Finiston.

As for Sir John and Lady Archbold, the varieties in their lives have been many since the day of that wild visit to Monasterlea. Her child in health by her side, Lady Archbold had set herself to work to make up for the little time that had been lost; to forget her sorrow; and to enjoy her life. She had got her own way, as she had always been accustomed to get it, and she no longer believed it possible that Fate or Heaven could have ever meant to venture to contradict her. She had long assured her husband that the motion through the air had alone cured their Katherine; that doctors were humbugs, and priests impostors. That wary old man had known very well the effect of fresh air on such a patient! Yet to be sure they owed it to themselves to seem grateful. They had gone, no doubt, to ask a favour, and, after all, the favour had been granted. Lady Archbold frowned when her husband attempted to check her in her haughty discourse, which criticised pretty equally the doings of both heaven and earth. But she made no objection when he spoke of sending a present to Monasterlea. Some one there must get a gift from their hands. So a present was sent to May with Miss Archbold's love. It was a valuable work-box of Indian carving, with fittings of filigree silver. The little girl had been a nice little girl, said Lady Archbold, and Katherine had pronounced her to be highly agreeable. She was really deserving of such a handsome box. And the present was accepted, after some hesitation on Miss Martha's part, and was duly installed as an ornament in the parlour at Monasterlea. But May did not hoard it among her treasures as she would have done had Katherine not slighted her dead uncle. She did not rub it all over with a loving touch, nor gaze at it with delight, as she often did afterwards with Paul's black cross. The box took its place as an ornament of the house, and was admired, and nothing more.

Lady Archbold's plan of self-indulgence included the over-indulgence of her daughter. Katherine was allowed to do anything she pleased, to have all she wished for, to love and entertain herself with any one she fancied, to dislike whom she chose, and to punish whom she disliked. She was Lady Archbold's only child, and it was good

enough work for the world to amuse her with the best it had to give. Had she been less beautiful, her father would have perceived sooner what in the end he had to see. He had to admit that the girl was growing up ignorant and unruly. She would not learn or obey. Her passions were boisterous, her covetousness unbounded. Her appetite for praise, for amusement, for display, and power, were alike insatiable and intolerable. She was becoming irksome even to her parents. So Katherine was at last taken from Camlough, whence many weeping governesses had departed in their time, and was placed at a boarding-school in England.

But even then all the trouble was not over. Whatever might be the reason, Katherine Archbold did not remain long at any one school. Mistresses were too harsh, companions too exacting, or Katherine was unmanageable and selfish. Sir John and Lady Archbold found the whole world in cruel conspiracy against their idol. At last they took her abroad, and placed her at a fashionable Parisian school. Here, after some time, there were no longer complaints of her. Here, after two years, she was found a woman fully grown, with her beauty quite developed, a thousand fascinations and accomplishments acquired, and with manners as silken as her hair. Again Lady Archbold was triumphant over Fate. Her efforts had vanquished yet another threatened disappointment. The father and mother exulted over her, and carried her away, glorifying her to the fullest satisfaction of their pride. They decked her, and flattered her, and bowed down before her. And after some months of travelling up and down in foreign countries, they took her to London and presented her to the world. And then there came more travelling and visiting among English friends. A home, however noble, being hidden behind Irish mountains, was not likely to be soon sought by Miss Archbold.

It was just about this time, when Katherine was dancing out her first season, and while May Mourne, a young woman of another sort, was waxing towards a healthier maturity, that old Tibbie made a move at Tobereevil, which was destined to have an influence on the lives of the two girls.

The miser was sick. What was the matter with him no one knew outside the gates. For Simon would not hear of a doctor, and Tibbie undertook to cure him. True, it was said that Tibbie knew more of the rank and poisonous growths that were

hidden in the darkest spots in the heart of the Wicked Woods than of kindly and healing herbs such as restore human life. But Tibbie knew what she was about, and she undertook to cure her master.

He lay in a sick-room, the ceiling of which let in the rain. The windows were stuffed with rags in sundry places, and the wind came in boldly through many loopholes and crannies. The blankets were scant on the bed; but this did not matter, as the miser would not remove any of his ordinary clothing. He wore vest, and hat, and boots as he lay, with a stick at his hand to help him to spring up if needful. Did he lie in his bed as a sick man should lie, he might be cheated into a serious illness. In the end he should be made away with as dead, while some one would get hold of his possessions. Tibbie's moving shadow, as she prowled about, haunted him from all corners of the room. Tibbie might want to strangle him were he not ready to defend himself with that stick. He hated Tibbie, and his fears distorted her into a demon, whereas she was only a cunning old woman. And Con was his only refuge from Tibbie, yet the miser was too sick to relish the pranks of his fool.

Tibbie never brought him his scanty messes of food, nor his dose of healing herbs, that she did not also administer a bitter which he could not swallow, to wit, a hint that her master should make his will.

"Make it an' sign it an' lock it bye," she would say. "It won't shoot ye nor poison ye. It won't give ye faver nor cholic. Ye'll live the longer for knowin' that all ye have'll go to poor innocent Con, yer brother's own child, instead of bein' wrastled over an' torn to bits by strangers. The simple boy'll put nothin' to waste, but keep up the place as it's always been kep, an' be a credit to the family name."

The miser gnashed his teeth under her hands, but gave her fair words, because he was afraid of her. He was obstinate, however, and would not satisfy her. Then she began to punish him. She kindled a large fire in the hungry grate, consuming coals and wood before his eyes with such speed that the miser groaned and cried at the waste, as though his own withered bones had been crackling in the furnace. Then she brought wine to his side, and fat roasted hens, and large rolls of butter, and tea, and ham, besides every other delicacy that could be had in the country, taking care to magnify the cost of each dish as she laid it before him. And then when

she had tortured him sufficiently in this way she went away and left him unattended in his lair. And at last he declared that he could deny her no longer, but must crave her to bring him ink and a pen. He would beg her to stand by while he wrote to his lawyer. The lawyer must come quickly and draw up the will.

Now was Tibbie's moment of exultation. She felt rewarded for all her ingenuity when she saw the miser's lean hand scrawling the words over the paper. But Tibbie was not able to read, or she would have known even then that her master had outwitted her.

Tibbie had gone too far; had been a thought too clever. She had tortured him so that he desired to be revenged on her. He had never believed Con to be his brother's son; would not have suffered him to come near him if he had. Tibbie was an impostor, but she was useful to him. Con was an impostor, but he amused him. But now Tibbie must be punished, and there was a nephew named Paul. He would torment his tormentor by bringing her face to face with the heir of Tobereevil. Heir of Tobereevil! The very thought of such a title enraged him. But Tibbie must be punished.

So the letter to the lawyer contained instructions relating to an advertisement. Through the medium of every English and Irish paper notice was to be given to one Paul Finiston that his presence was earnestly requested at Tobereevil. The lawyer read the letter thrice over, and turned it upside down, and turned it inside out. But there was no mistake about it, and the advertisement went flying over the world.

But long before the notice fell under Paul's eye the miser was well and stronger than he had been for many years. Tibbie had fallen back into her proper place, knowing that her master had slipped through her fingers this time. The miser's anxiety to punish Tibbie had grown weaker, while his superstitious dread of his kinsman had returned with more than its former strength. And he was fully prepared to resist Paul Finiston, if so be the lad should prove so greedy as to obey his uncle's summons.

CHAPTER IX. KATHERINE WITH A LOVER.

THE Archbolds had been out of the country for two or three years. Those hopes and fears, and anxieties and delights about their troublesome and idolised daughter had kept them in such a tumult of going and coming, and not knowing

where they were to be next or what they were to do afterwards, that they never had been able to drag themselves so far out of her reach as to repose themselves, even for a day, in the solitude of Camlough. But now they were coming home. The news spread gladly over the country. Sir John was a good landlord, and pleasant-spoken with his people. He was "that kind, you wouldn't think he was a gentleman at all," whereas the agent might be "an imperor for impidence!" There would be no more ejections. There would be no more snapping of whips in an honest but helpless man's face; for the agent was better-mannered when the master was in the country. Even the ladies got a welcome, which in truth they had never earned. It was a fine thing, after all, to have a grand lady going stepping about the mountains, even though Lady Archbold's high nose might be a thing of awe to the peasants. So the Archbolds were at home; and they had brought with them an Anglo-American mother and her son; about whom there is a story which shall be told.

It may be that this castle of Camlough was not in reality more magnificent than many other dwellings of its kind. Perhaps here surprise added something to splendour. The castle in itself was an imposing mass of stateliness, old enough and grey enough to accord well with the scenery around it; yet with no signs of age or decay; strong and grand, and big and handsome, overflowing even through its windows and doors with the fulness of the adornments and luxuries of the day. It stood in a sheltered valley, among mountains. This valley was in reality "Camlough in the hills," for the hills had opened and made place for it down among their knees, and cherished and protected it, kept away the harsher winds, and invited down the kindly sun, till under their fostering care it had grown rich and fruitful, and sumptuous with beauty. The loneliness of its glens and dingles made fairyland in the fissures of the awful rocks which overhung it. Trees of the most beautiful foliage had climbed dizzy heights, and clothed them with colour, and softened their wild outlines. The scarlet berries and light plumage of the mountain-ash hung clear against the deep blue sky. A hundred waterfalls made silver tracks down the brown-purple steepes of the mountains, like gleaming stairways into the clouds. There were lakes in the violet summits of

those broom-covered mountains, and wonderful wildernesses of beauty in their hollows. One vast torrent roared all the winter through at the back of the castle, on its way from some lofty tarn to the sea. For at one side the valley the encircling hills gave way, and the blue Atlantic filled the gap on the horizon, with its flecks of creamy rock and its amethystine islands, its flights of white birds and rare flitting sails. And craft from the nearest fishing-village on the coast would shelter betimes under the cliffs; and sometimes a stranger would alight upon the warm gold sands of the creek and explore a little this nook of beauty, which was so generously cultivated and so gratefully fruitful, so hidden from the world, as if giants had built it round with strong high walls on purpose to keep it a solitude for ever. And seals would lie and bask upon the sand in the hot sun; and it was haunted by a mermaid, who was often seen swimming round the headlands in the gloaming, and was well known to sleep here upon moonlight nights. And the golden eagles barked to one another over the months of the deep caves, through which the high green water, with thunder and music, rolled itself heavily into mysterious abysses of the earth, coming back again moaning, with much tumult and confusion.

The castle itself stood at the back of the valley well set against the brawniest-wooded mountain of the range. Blooming gardens gathered round it, blushing up to its windows, and laughing in at its very doors, and wandering away thence into wide mossy lawns, and soft leafy slopes and dells. There was an exuberant growth of flowers everywhere, and people fancied that their colours were more brilliant at Camlough than at any other place. Certain it is that fruits would ripen here in open air that would not grow out of hot-house in other parts of the land. A walk round the back premises of the castle explained the mystery of how everything were done in order and kept in order in the place as perfectly as though Camlough were an outskirts of London. All around one vast paved yard cottages stood in rows, which were the homes of the tradesmen whom it was useful to have at hand. There were trees growing in the middle of the yard, and garden-beds round the windows of the cottages. Trees leaned high over the walls, and nodded about the chimneys, and the peaks of the mountains looked over into the yard. And the goodwives knew better than to

keep their houses untidy, for many pretty presents came from the castle to the thrifty housewife. They would sit out of the sun under their trees with their sewing in their hands, and their children playing about them, while their good men were absent at the castle, as it might be, or were busy in the sheds at the lower end of the yard.

Thus it was that Sir John dwelt among his people like a feudal lord surrounded by his retainers. Numbers of his tenants lived high above on the hills, or their dwellings nestled in bloomy places between the rocks, by the side of running streams, or peeping from behind shelter of rugged cliffs against the sea. There was no scarcity of anything about Camlough, neither of human beings, nor of kine, nor of flocks, nor of birds, nor of deer and other wild animals, nor of the produce of the earth.

It was midsummer time, and Katherine entertained a hay-making group, sitting under a haycock in a meadow, telling them anecdotes of the neighbourhood, giving ludicrous descriptions of the people, including the miser of Tobereevil and the dead monk who had lived at Monasterlea. It was the midsummer heat that specially reminded her of that strange, wild visit that she had once paid to the monastery, and she related the story for the amusement of her guests. She was aware that this was a picturesque incident in her life, and it charmed her to sketch herself as the centre of a picture. There was at least one person by her side who was eager to swallow any morsel which her vanity might throw him. It was scarcely likely that any young man should be many hours at Camlough and not be written down in the list of Katherine's suitors. It was still less likely that he should be welcome there if he chose to keep his heart to himself. Katherine was a queen who would have none around her but her courtiers. In the present instance here was a willing if a suffering captive, who had already graced many triumphs of his royal mistress. The name of this unfortunate was Christopher Lee. He was not a wit, nor a genius, nor handsome; neither was he as yet a millionaire. Whether he ever should be the latter or not, was a question at present in the balance. It seemed hanging upon the blowing of a straw. It all lay at the mercy of a woman's little humour; a yes or a no, a smile or a frown; for Christopher was one of those headlong people who will stake the whole world upon a die. He was a large, light-haired, long-faced

youth, with fair, dim eyes, and not over-much brains under his smooth pale forehead. His long eager lips were too nervous and full of feeling to keep safe company with the simplicity of his eyes. He was not like a man to do well with the world unless Fortune might choose to take him in her lap and make a pet of him. And this had seemed a likely chance; for Fortune is very fond of odd playthings. Yet she could not have done better than take Christopher on her knee; and this is the young man of whom a story could be told. To be the heroine of that story was Katherine Archbold's liveliest excitement at this moment: and it must be said that she looked fit to be the heroine of the most fascinating tale that ever was told, as she sat against a hayrick, holding a hat crowned with poppies above her golden head.

It ought to be a pleasant task to describe Katherine Archbold. The description of a blonde beauty is always charming, and Katherine was a blonde of the most genuine type. Her hair was of the purest and most luminous sun-colour. When loosened, it fell round her like a cloak, silken in texture, rippling and flossy, and descending below her knees. When tied and pinned up in the order of fashion, it was found woven into a massive crown of gold, which alone proclaimed her a queen by its glory upon her head. Her features came as near to the old Greek model as features ever do in these countries; and her eyes were blue; the glamouring, light-receiving, forget-me-not blue. The only thing you could find fault with was the expression of her mouth; but not many people thought of it, as it certainly did not mar the physical beauty of her face. The mouth in itself was a handsome one, but to a few observers there was a failure about it somehow. Through all the many changes of the countenance it was not found to be a mobile mouth. It could keep a hard secret well while the eyes were declaring that this face was the most tell-tale face ever seen. Sometimes a tinge of cruelty constrained it to be frank, and to pain those worshippers who might be watching for its smiles. And unfortunately this cruelty was not the mischievousness of fun, but the cruelty of a will that would not suffer itself to be crossed. She was tall and robust, and stately in her carriage, and more costly as to her raiment than a princess.

"I wish I had seen that old monk," said Christopher, rolling his pale eyes with enthusiasm. "But for him," he added to

Katherine, "you might not be in the world; and what would my life have been then?" he asked, blankly, as he looked this new idea in the face.

"You are a fool," said Katherine, emphatically, but in the softest whisper.

Christopher gazed up at her and blinked with delight. He accepted her accusation, and enraptured himself over the idea of his folly. It was true that he had staked everything on her caprice, but he dreamed that all goodness and happiness were to be included in the reward of his venture. In the end that was soon to come his foolishness must be found equal to the most cautious wisdom. This is what she had hinted in her more serious moods, and who would dare insinuate that she was untrue?

"A ridiculous little mummy of a man," went on Katherine.

"Who is dead, however," interrupted her father, very gently. "Come, Kate, we are not going to laugh at dead men."

Miss Archbold bowed her head, and frowned under the shelter of her hat, and exerted severe control over her temper, while she tore up some fresh roses with sudden fury in her fingers.

"That is how I am afraid you will tear up my heart," said simple Christopher, trying to make a joke. But a flash from her eyes made him quail as he spoke, while the next moment he was blinded by a shower of rent rose-leaves.

"Oh, you fool, you fool!" murmured Katherine, who had seen his fright, and who had melted again as suddenly as she had flamed. Christopher was himself again, for that musical murmur of a curious pet name was the very signal and watchword of his delight. And he was right in expecting that she would now be very good to him, for she dropped him one sweet word after another, while she picked up her flowers and pretended to put them to rights again; as if sorry for the destruction she had made.

Mrs. Lee sighed as she looked at the picture of the beautiful young woman sitting smiling in the hay, and the bewitched young man at her feet. Mrs. Lee was a troubled-looking woman, with large brown eyes, and very odd manners. This son of hers was like to break her heart.

Sir John stood a little aloof from the group, and had evidently at this moment got something on his mind. He had done a good-natured thing and was nervous about confessing it. He was not master of his castle which people envied him. But the

truth came out at last. He had invited a young friend to pay a visit to his daughter.

"Not the old lady from Monasterlea, I hope?" said Katherine, without a frown.

"No," said the father, laughing, because relieved of his secret. "Not the old lady, only the little girl."

Katherine hesitated to smile, but afterwards smiled brightly. The recollection of little May was very pleasant to her. There never had been a lover on her list who had admired her more frankly than little May.

"It was rather premature of you to give an invitation," said Lady Archbold, who had not seen Katherine's smile. "The girl was a nice child enough when we saw her; but, brought up in the wilderness as she has been, the chances are that she is uncouth and uneducated."

Katherine rather liked this suggestion.

"Whether or not," she said, imperiously, "we are going to have her here."

"Certainly, my darling, if you wish it," her ladyship said, hurriedly. And then seeing that Mrs. Lee looked strangely at her, she drew away that lady to stroll with her under some distant trees; and to explain by the way how generous and hospitable her dear Katherine was, and what a lively attachment she had always cherished to a stupid little girl whom she had not seen for years. Sir John also made a thankful escape, being relieved of his confession, and having regained his peace of mind.

When the elders had gone, Katherine stood up, yawned a little, threw herself back against the haycock, and remained reclining there, as if lazily enjoying her life, and the sunshine, and every soft influence of the moment. She gazed towards the clouds, the hills, the trees, the lawns, and then slowly brought her eyes to Christopher's passionate gaze, which was bent upon her full all the time. Then she smiled in his eyes, just as if she had been a true-hearted woman who had pledged her love, and was not ashamed of its being seen.

"Katherine, Katherine!" cried Christopher, as if in bodily pain, "why will you love to torture me? Why will you not speak out at once? When will you answer me? When will you promise to be my wife?"

She took his outstretched hand tenderly in her own, and patted it soothingly with her jewelled fingers.

"Poor little Christopher!" she said, "poor dear Christopher! why will you not be patient?"

"Because I love you!" broke out the poor youth; "I love you—bitterly!" And he fairly burst into tears.

"I do not like bitter love," said Katherine, coldly, letting fall his hand.

Christopher dashed off his tears, and turned aside with an impulse of sullen shame.

"It is hard to know how to please," he said, "when one's heart is breaking."

"Breaking, is it?" said Katherine, lightly. "Oh no, don't let it be so foolish. Come, now, you need not look so sad. Why should we hurry over the pleasant part of life? There is no reason for haste, is there?"

"There is reason for haste," said Christopher, vehemently.

"Nay, now, what is it?" said Katherine, staring at him.

But Christopher's unruliness was over for the present. He had blushed crimson, and had nothing more to say. He folded his long arms, and gazed doggedly on the ground.

"Come, now, you are sulky!" said Katherine. "Cannot you be good-tempered? And I was just going to offer you a treat."

"A treat?" echoed Christopher, without raising his eyes.

"Yes, a treat." She laid her hand coaxingly on his arm. "Are you quite too ill-humoured to ride with me to-morrow?"

"Not quite," replied Christopher, unbending.

"In that case, I am going to Monasterlea," said Katherine.

"To Monasterlea?" said Christopher, astray.

"Yes; to unearthing a young woman out of the ruins."

And Katherine laughed gaily; expecting a new excitement in the meek-eyed worship which little May was going to give her.

CHRONICLES OF LONDON STREETS.

FLEET-STREET (THE WEST END).

PERHAPS no part of London has ever been more illuminated by flares of torches or blazes of squibs than the Temple Bar end of Fleet-street.

It was to that attenuated figure of Queen Elizabeth in the south-east niche that the raging Protestants of Charles the Second's reign made their fanatical pilgrimages, at the dictation of that clever sedition-monger Lord Shaftesbury. These dangerous processions of an angry and turbulent mob

arose out of the spurious Popish Plot. This entirely imaginary conspiracy, which led to the persecution and death of many innocent men, came to light on the 12th of August, 1678. As the king was strolling in the park, one Kirby, a chemist, accosted him, and said: "Sire, keep within the company. Your enemies have a design upon your life, and you may be shot in this very walk." The intrusive chemist, then gaining the ear of the swarthy king, assured him that the Jesuits had hired two men, named Grove and Pickering, to shoot him with silver bullets, and Sir George Wakeman, the queen's physician, to poison him. Doctor Tongue, a restless London divine, who had written violently against the Jesuits, had been Kirby's informant. Tongue had been warned by a man who had thrust papers with the intelligence under his door. The mysterious Protestant turned out to be the afterwards notorious Titus Oates, the son of an Anabaptist preacher, who had taken orders, and had received a small living from the Duke of Norfolk. Indicted for perjury, Oates became a naval chaplain, but had been dismissed with disgrace. He had then turned Catholic, and entered the Jesuit college at St. Omer, whence he had been ignominiously expelled. Before the Lord Treasurer and Sir Edmundbury Godfrey, a celebrated anti-Roman Catholic justice, these fanatical meddlers and wretches invented and repeated a myriad lies. Four Irish ruffians had been hired to stab the king at Windsor, and Sir George Wakeman, for poisoning Charles, was to receive fifteen thousand pounds. For killing the king, Grove was to receive fifteen thousand pounds, and Pickering, a less avaricious murderer, thirty thousand masses. Twenty thousand London Roman Catholics were to rise on an appointed day, massacre all the Protestants, and burn London a second time. Scotland and Ireland were to rise, and two hundred thousand pounds and forty thousand "black bills" had been provided for the latter revolt. All the Irish Protestants were to be massacred; while, according to that brazen liar Oates, eighty Jesuit hirelings had expended seven hundred fire-balls in burning London in 1666, when they had stolen in the confusion fourteen thousand pounds' worth of property. If the Duke of York did not consent to the utter extirpation of the Protestant religion, "then to pot James must go," was the Jesuits' decision. The plotters, as Oates declared, had a secret jargon of their own. Fire-balls were called "Tewkes-

bury mustard pills," containing a notable biting sauce. The king was to eat no more Christmas pies. If Charles would not turn R. C., he was no longer to be C. R. Among other doomed victims were Burnet, the historian, and the celebrated controversialist, Stillingfleet. Père la Chaise, the confessor of Louis the Fourteenth, had sent ten thousand pounds for the king's assassin, a Spaniard was ready with the same handsome reward, and a Benedictine prior had promised six thousand pounds. These detestable falsehoods were eagerly swallowed by a multitude whom Charles's French alliance had driven insane with suspicion. Two months later, on the 17th of October, the supposed murder of Sir Edmundbury Godfrey, whose body was found in a ditch a little north of Primrose Hill, produced a fresh popular paroxysm. The justice had really committed suicide, but it was supposed that he had been murdered by two men of the Queen's Chapel at Somerset House. A Captain Bedloe, a man still more infamous, if possible, than even Oates, now presented himself. He was known to be a thief and swindler. This base rascal, careless whom he sent to Tyburn or to Tower Hill, swore point-blank to Godfrey's murder by the queen's Popish servants. Finding the populace eager for fresh lies, he asserted that ten thousand men from Flanders were to be landed in Bridlington Bay, and pushed on at once, in order to seize Hull. French forces from Brest were simultaneously to surprise Jersey and Guernsey. In Radnorshire, Lords Powis and Peters were also to form an army, aided by twenty thousand pilgrims sent from Spain to Milford Haven. Forty thousand Catholics, supplied with money by Lord Stafford, Lord Carrington, Lord Brudenel, and Coleman, the ex-secretary of the Duchess of York, were to be posted at the alehouse doors in London, in readiness, when the signal of rising was given, to murder the soldiers as they hurried out of their quarters. Bedloe himself, for various murders, had been promised four thousand pounds, a commission from Lord Bellasis, and a benediction from the pope. No wonder that the alarmed City instantly chained up its gates, and that the foolish City chamberlain declared that, but for these precautions, "all true Protestants would rise some morning with their throats cut." Shaftesbury and other plotters took good care to keep the popular frenzy up to blood heat. The dead body of Godfrey was car-

ried on a bier to its grave at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, preceded by seventy-two Protestant divines, and followed by a thousand persons of distinction, while at the funeral sermon two stalwart rectors mounted the pulpit, and stood on either side of the preacher, lest he should be murdered by the Papists before the very eyes of the congregation. As for Oates, he was lodged in Whitehall, protected, guarded, and cheered by a pension of twelve hundred pounds a year. But the mob was too much alarmed not to be cruel. The myriad heads of the Hydra thirsted for blood. Coleman, Father Leland, Grove, and Pickering were all hung, and Poole, Green, and Berry, suspected of Godfrey's murder, followed them to death. The Duke of York retired to Brussels. The Duke of Monmouth grew more and more popular and dangerous, and his legitimacy was now asserted. In the full furnace-heat of this madness, Shaftesbury and his partisans brought in their famous bill for the total exclusion of the Duke of York from the crown of England and Ireland, and the Lower House passed this bill by a majority of seventy-nine.

The street processions organised by Shaftesbury to drive away the Duke of York and scare Charles, were on a gigantic scale, and appealed strongly to the excited people. First came:

1. Six whiffers (men to clear the way) in pioneers' caps and red waistcoats.
2. A bellman ringing his bell and continually crying with "a dolesome voice," "Remember Justice Godfrey."
3. An effigy representing the unfortunate justice as he was found near Primrose Hill, in a decent black habit, white gloves, the cravat with which it was supposed he was strangled, white gloves, and large spots of blood on his wrists, breast, and shirt, rode upon a white horse, held up by a fictitious murderer who rode behind him, in the way it was presumed the corpse was carried from Somerset House.
4. A priest in a surplice and cope embroidered with skulls, cross-bones, and skeletons. He gave away pardons very lavishly to all who promised to murder Protestants, acts which he loudly proclaimed to be meritorious.
5. A priest bearing a great silver cross.
6. Four Carmelite friars in black and white robes.
7. Four Greyfriars.
8. Six Jesuits with bloody daggers.
9. "Four wind musicks," called the

waits, playing all the way—loud and brazen enough, no doubt, were the four wind musicks.

10. Four bishops in purple, with lawn sleeves, golden crosses on their breasts, and crosses in their hands.

11. Four other bishops "in their pontificalibus;" that is, surplices, rich embroidered copes, and golden mitres.

12. Six flaunting cardinals in scarlet robes and broad red hats.

13. The pope's chief physician with Jesuits' powder (Peruvian bark), and many grotesque and unmentionable badges of his office.

14. Two more priests in surplices, bearing golden crosses.

Then came the pope himself in a scarlet chair of state, embroidered with golden bells and crosses. His holiness's feet were on a cushion, and a boy in a surplice sat on each side of him, holding a white silk banner painted with red crosses and "bloody consecrated daggers." The pope was arrayed in a rich scarlet gown lined with ermine, and daubed with gold and silver lace. He wore his triple tiara and a triple gilt collar of sham jewels, beads, and Agnus Dei, and prominently above the rest Saint Peter's potent keys. At the pope's back tripped and whispered the devil, waving a blazing torch, urging his holiness aloud to murder the king, forge a pretended Presbyterian plot, and fire the City again. The pope was followed by a body-guard of one hundred and fifty torches, followed by several thousand volunteer flambeaux-bearers, and a fellow whom Roger North describes, who, with a stentorophonic tube (a speaking-trumpet), kept remorselessly bellowing "Abhorrrers! Abhorrrers!" (the name given by the Whigs to the enemies of the Exclusion Bill). Last of all came an obsequious, time-serving, civil gentleman, who was meant to represent either Sir Roger l'Estrange (a Tory journalist and pamphleteer in the pay of Louis the Fourteenth) or the Duke of York. "Taking all in good part, he went on his way to the fire."

The whole way, say contemporaneous writers, the balconies, windows, and roofs were covered with shouting multitudes, expressing their abhorrence of Popery, and the Whigs and Tories fought with volleys of squibs. The procession moved on in slow and solemn state, till after some hours it reached Temple Bar, where the houses were turned into actual mountains of clamorous human beings.

After a great display of fireworks, a

huge bonfire was built up at the Inner Temple Gate to entertain the spectators, and his holiness, after "some compliments and reluctances," was toppled into the flames, the devil, who till then accompanied him as his faithful adviser, laughing as he shifted down from his chair, and left the pontiff to his fate. That same memorable evening there were bonfires in most of the other chief streets of London, the people shouting round them, "Let Popery perish, and Papists, with their plots and counter-plots, be for ever confounded." It was these processions that led the contemptuous and classical Tories to invent the word mob, "mobile vulgus," and it was about this time the nicknames Whig (sour whey) and Tory (Irish rebel) were first used in political warfare.

Even in Swift's time the processions continued; and one especial one, in which Addison was supposed to be mixed up, was violently stopped by the Tory government, who caused the wax figures to be seized in Drury-lane. In Wilkes's time the mob again came trooping to Temple Bar to burn a jack-boot, in ridicule of the obnoxious Lord Bute.

The celebrated Devil Tavern, in the reign of King James the First, stood in the close, now Child's-place, No. 2, Fleet-street, built by Child the eminent banker next the Bar, in 1788. Ben Jonson's immortal Apollo Club, where the wittiest and wisest of England so often met, has consecrated this place for ever. The Apollo Club, established by the rugged friend of Shakespeare, held its merry meetings in a room of the Devil Tavern. The Apollo room, a large and handsome one, and furnished with a gallery for music, was in later times frequently used for balls, and here, in 1775, Doctor Kenrick gave his lectures on Shakespeare. Over the door of the room, where so much canary had been tossed off, and where so many wise and brilliant men had laughed away the midnight, was a slab, still preserved, with the following roystering verses, written in gold letters on a black ground. They were probably from the pen of Ben Jonson, or that jovial Devonshire parson, Herrick:

Welcome all who lead or follow
To the oracle of Apollo.
Here he speaks out of his pottle,
Or his tripos, his tower bottle;
All his answers are divine,
Truth itself doth flow in wine.
Hang up all the poor hop drinkers,
Cries old Tim the king of thinkers;
He the half of life abuses,
That sits watering with the muses;

Those dull girls no good can mean us,
 Wine it is the milk of Venus.
 And the poet's horse accounted,
 Ply it and you all are mounted;
 'Tis the true Phœbeian liquor,
 Clears the brain, makes wit the quicker,
 Pays all debts, cures all diseases,
 And at once three senses pleases.
 Welcome all who lead or follow
 To the oracle of Apollo.
 Oh, rare Ben Jonson!

The last four words (forming the epitaph which an Oxfordshire baronet had cut upon the paving-stone over the poet's grave in the north aisle of Westminster Abbey) we must presume to have been added to the verses after Jonson's death.

On a slab of black marble, over the chimney-piece of this classic room, were inscribed the following lines, written, as Gifford thinks, in imitation of those rules of the Roman entertainments, so industriously collected by the learned Lipsius. We append the old translation, written by we know not whom, unworthy as it is of the crisp Latin of the original code:

As the fund of our pleasure let each pay his shot,
 Except some chance friend whom a member brings
 in,
 Far hence be the sad, the lewd fop and the sot,
 For such have the plagues of good company been.
 Let the learned and witty, the jovial and gay,
 The generous and honest compose our free state,
 And the more to exalt our delight whilst we stay,
 Let none be debarred from his choice female mate.
 Let no scent offensive the chamber infest,
 Let fancy not cost prepare all our dishes,
 Let the caterer mind the taste of each guest,
 And the cook in his dressing comply with their
 wishes.
 Let's have no disturbance about taking place,
 To show your nice breeding or out of vain pride;
 Let the drawers be ready with wine and fresh glasses,
 Let the waiters have eyes though their tongues must
 be ty'd.
 Let our wines without mixture or strum be all fine,
 Or call up the master and break his dull noddle,
 Let no sober bigot here think it a sin
 To push on the drinking a moderate bottle.
 Let the contests be rather of books than of wine,
 Let the company be neither noisy nor mute,
 Let none of things serious much less divine,
 When belly and head full profanely dispute.
 Let no saucy fiddler presume to intrude,
 Unless he is sent for to vary our bliss,
 With wit, mirth, and dancing, and singing conclude,
 To regale every sense with delight in excess.

There is nothing remarkable about these rules laid down by Ben Jonson; they provide only for the goodness of the wine, the cleanness and neatness requisite to comfort, and the exclusion of noisy, ribald, moping, or drunken persons, the bane and kill-joys of such pleasant meetings. We cannot suppose that the clause allowing the introduction of ladies was often taken advantage of, nor could dancing have been fre-

quently practised, for Ben was too ponderous for the brawl or the coranto. Clause fifteen guards against the importunities and pertinacities of those intrusive wandering musicians who, in the seventeenth century, haunted taverns, and levied contributions on the guests. When the talk was good, and men like Donne and Selden were exchanging learning, or Randolph and Broome wit, this rough music forced upon the company would have been especially disagreeable, and Ben did well to bar out such "saucy fiddlers." These laws, says that genial critic, Leigh Hunt, for whom, however, Ben was far too muscular and robust, "are composed in his usual style of elaborate and compiled learning, not without a taste of that dictatorial self-sufficiency which forms an indelible part of his character."

There is no doubt that the Apollo Club was one of the earliest associations of the kind known in London. Many of the elements of the modern club were comprehended in its constitution. The meetings were more formal than those earlier ones at the Mermaid. Its members had a room and rules of their own. The attendance was habitual though voluntary. No chance guest of the tavern could intrude on Ben and his tribe. Every man paid for himself, and probably also joined in the subscription for the use of the room, which was no doubt set apart for the use of the club at certain prescribed evenings. The thrifty and simple age had not yet dreamed of such palaces as now adorn Pall Mall and Piccadilly; of liveried servants, libraries, and splendid furniture. The Apollo room, where men who had known Shakespeare talked of him and repeated his merry sayings, had no doubt a sanded or rush-strewn floor, with tree-boughs in the fireplace in summer, and a cheerful fire in winter. Plain stamped leather hangings or simple wainscot adorned the walls, and the meat was served on shining pewter. The drawers were such nimble creatures as the Francis Shakespeare sketched in Henry the Fourth, and Sir Simon himself, the landlord of the house, was no doubt a rosy-faced, portly personage, with much of Falstaff's promptness at banter, and a fondness for odd sayings stolen from plays, and quaint proverbs and snatches of old world songs, that were ready missiles against satirical guests.

It is but waste castle-building even to attempt to picture one of those gatherings in the Apollo room, but we must perforce see one figure standing out above the rest

and throned above all. That figure is Ben Jonson, the monarch, father, and despot of the company. Burly and massive as the subsequent sultan of London clubs, equally overbearing and equally irresistible, he has a face marked like Johnson's by disease, and has a malign melancholy equally tainting his blood, and driving him from the lonely study to the crowded tavern, from the dusty quiet of silent folios to the noise, mirth, and banter of taverns. Ben himself has sketched his own portrait, "his mountain belly and his rocky face." His features are massive and strongly marked, his mouth is grim and sour. Many chagrins, many vexations, have furrowed that massive, knotty brow. It has taken many hogsheads of good canary to fill out that great elephantine carcass, many intellectual victories in the wrestling ring Ben must have won before he gained that lordly, confident air, that rough readiness with which he tomahawks an antagonist. He rolls in the presidential chair the undisputed Grand Turk of the chief tavern club of London. "Let nobody repeat to us insipid poetry," he writes, as if all that he should read of his own must infallibly be otherwise. There would indeed have been humility in Jonson if he had thought his own poems insipid. Rough and knotty they might be, harsh and crabbed they sometimes were, but Ben was never insipid till the palsy seized him. Jonson's arrogance came from disappointment, as Doctor Johnson's came from success. With more sunshine Ben Jonson would have ripened and mellowed, with more east wind Doctor Johnson would have been less domineering.

Every member of the Devil Club must have known the main facts of Ben Jonson's life. They had all heard that he was of Scotch descent, his father a clergyman, suffering imprisonment under Queen Mary, probably for his staunch Protestantism. His mother, soon after his father's death, married a small builder or master-bricklayer. The sturdy boy was sent by a friend to Westminster School, where Camden the historian was the second master. At sixteen probably Jonson was sent to St. John's College, Cambridge, according to Fuller. Called home to work at his father's trade, he soon threw down hod and trowel and joined the army in Flanders (Gifford says probably at the time that Vere was recovering the spirit of the army by storming Davenport, and other acts of gallantry). Ben there fought and killed an enemy in single combat, and carried off his spoils in the sight

of both armies. "I did not shame the profession of arms by my actions," he used to say afterwards. On his return home, Ben Jonson, then about nineteen, took to the stage; Wood says, to the Green Curtain, an obscure theatre in Shoreditch, with what success is uncertain. He fought a duel with a brother actor, and killing him, was thrown into prison for murder, and narrowly escaped the gallows. His antagonist, as he afterwards told Drummond, had come into the field with a sword ten inches longer than his own. In prison he turned Roman Catholic, and on his release married. Two years later, 1578, he wrote his admirable play, *Every Man in his Humour*. There is a groundless tradition that Shakespeare, ten years older than Jonson, read the play in the manuscript, and saved it from rejection. But Gifford has shown that it was really brought out at the Rose, a rival theatre to the Globe. Yet this is certain, that the play was afterwards altered for the Globe, and that Shakespeare appeared in one of the characters. At this time Ben, though poor, and living by altering plays for Henslowe and Alleyn, the managers, who advanced small sums upon the work, was yet friendly with Drayton and Chapman, Rowley, Middleton, and Fletcher, and had been writing for three years in conjunction with his subsequent enemies, Marston and Decker. His next play, *Every Man out of his Humour*, was honoured by the presence of Elizabeth. Soon after the accession of James, the poet fell into disgrace. For a satirical passage in *Eastward Ho*, against "the industrious Scots," written by Jonson, Chapman, and Marston, the three dramatists were thrown into prison. A report was at first spread that they would have their ears and noses slit in the pillory. On their release they gave an entertainment, at which Camden and Selden were present. At this feast Ben's mother drank to him, and showed him a paper containing a strong and lusty poison, which she had intended to have mixed with his drink had he been sentenced to such a degrading punishment. "To show she was no churl," Jonson adds, "she designed to have first drank of it herself."

In 1605, two years after James's accession, Ben Jonson produced his fine play of the Fox, in which he was unjustly supposed to have ridiculed Sir Richard Sutton, the excellent founder of the Charter House; but Ben had many enemies, and he lashed them into incessant rages. About this time Ben Jonson left the Church of Rome,

and, as Drummond perhaps maliciously reports, in the fervour of his zeal drank out the full cup of wine at his first communion. In 1606, for the unfortunate marriage of the Earl of Essex, Jonson began one of the earliest and most beautiful of his long series of masques. The poet, now a favourite with James, became laureate, receiving a pension for life of a hundred marks. Three years after this, Daniel, the previous court poet, died, and James would now have knighted Ben had not the poet been unwilling. The king, however, gave him a reversionary grant of the office of Master of the Revels, a post which he never filled. Soon after the accession of Charles the First, Jonson's health seems to have given way. Always scorbutic, he now became palsied and dropsical. His play of the New Inn was driven from the stage by his malignant enemies, who gained courage when the old lion grew sick. The kindly king instantly sent him a hundred pounds; he soon afterwards granted the poet's petition to make the pension of one hundred marks two hundred pounds, and added, moreover, an annual tierce of canary (Jonson's favourite wine). Evils now fell fast as snow-flakes on the dying man. Inigo Jones, jealous of his violent coadjutor, had him removed from the office of Writer of Court Masques, and the Court of Aldermen (1631) withdrew his City poet's annual pension of one hundred nobles. He died poor, in 1637. His wife and children died before him.

Child's bank, the oldest in London, was founded in the reign of Charles the First, by Francis Child, an apprentice of William Wheeler, goldsmith, whose daughter he married. The banker's old street sign, the Marigold, still hangs in the front office, with the motto "Ainsi mon ame" gilt upon a green ground, and the marigold (often mistaken for a rising sun) still blooms pleasantly upon the cheques. With this trusty firm Charles the Second, Nell Gwynne, Prince Rupert, and, last not least, Samuel Pepys, banked, and in that dim ecclesiastical-looking room over the gateway are still kept the accounts of Alderman Backwell, a partner of the first Child, for the sale of Dunkirk to the French, a bargain that led to the fall of Lord Clarendon, who was supposed to have reared his great palace in Piccadilly (the site of Albemarle-street) with the money. It was at Child and Blanchard's (next door to Temple Bar) that, in 1678, Dryden deposited the fifty pounds reward he offered for the detection

of Rochester's bullies, who had fallen upon and beaten him one winter evening in Rose-alley. In 1689, Sir Francis Child was saved from failure by fourteen hundred pounds lent his bank by the Duchess of Marlborough. Hogarth is said to have sketched the presentation of the timely aid. The late beautiful Countess of Jersey was a partner in the firm, and among the present partners is a descendant of Addison.

THE FIRST SNOW.

THERE is sorrow and there is mirth,
The soft white snow is draping the earth,
The boy is shouting and making a slide,
But the cottage hearth lacks fuel inside.

He dips his hands in the snow so gay,
And rubs them hard to keep cold away;
While the puffing beadle, that man of law,
Ties up the village pump with straw!

Chill is the time for man and beast,
The wind cuts sharp as a knife from the east;
The little ones from the cold and ice
Under the bedclothes creep like mice.

With comforters drawn to the chin,
The folk go stamping out and in,
And their noses, as they come and go,
Are red as rosebuds among the snow.

Hatless, capless, mad with fun,
Out of school the urchins run,
Quick as thought the balls are made,
And the air is thick with the cannonade.

They pause as the beadle passes by,
And hang their heads and hush their cry,
But just as the great man disappears
A cold ball strikes him behind the ears!

Off goes his hat—his red face turns,
Red as a turkey's-comb it burns,
But the spell is broken: with shouts and cries
The enemy pelts him till he flies!

All things around us, high or low,
Are under the spell of the white, white snow;
Its mystic hand with a silvern gleam
Trances all to a pleasant dream.

THE BLUEBOTTLE FLY.

A FRENCH ART-STUDENT'S STORY.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS. CHAPTER IV.

I HAVE never been able to remember how the remainder of this dread holiday was spent. Memory can recal nothing but a sick and weary search after repose—a yearning desire to lie down and forget all that had taken place since the morning; the scenes in which I had played such unwilling part; in short, my very self. But I walked on—on—on, for I could not rest, trying in vain to lay my aching head against a tree, or sitting down for a moment amid the grass and fern-leaves. But the endeavour was useless. No sooner were my limbs at ease than the whirring

and buzzing in my ears drove me distracted, reminding me with terrible exactness of the accursed spell which some foul sorcery seemed to have flung around me. It was now long past mid-day. I must have walked many miles during that sultry afternoon, without drift or intention, running forward, then turning back, to find myself at the same spot whence I had started. It was not a fête day, so the woods were peaceful enough, and I met but few people in this wild walk. One or two groups passed me on my way, and I observed that they all seemed scared at my approach, and turned to look after me when I had gone by. I remember that one old gentleman of benevolent aspect spoke to me in gentle tones; but the sound of a human voice brought back all the irritation to my brain, and I fled; and starting forward with a bound, all foot-sore, exhausted, and weary as I was, turned and ran up the steep acclivity I had just descended, as though the hounds and huntsmen were at my heels.

I had tasted nothing since the ill-starred repast with Père Ajax in the early morning; but I felt neither thirst nor hunger, only the peremptory necessity of rest, without the power to seek it, even for an instant. In short, the first symptoms of the brain fever, which was to bring me down to the lowest depths of misery, were already rioting through my whole system. It was not till sundown that I grew more calm; the cool quiet of the evening was soothing in the extreme. I came to myself, as it were, like one awaking from a troubled dream, and began to reconnoitre my whereabouts with something like a return to rational reflection. It was then that, with the greatest delight, I found myself close to the little fountain by the wall of the home park. I hailed the chance as the saving of my life. I drank greedily of the water, and bathed my temples in the hollow basin cut in the stone. The momentary relief seemed like the renovation of existence, and I hastened to the station, which is but a short distance from this spot, with more steadiness and self-command than I could possibly have anticipated, and was whirled into Paris without any cause for further excitement. I even walked home from the terminus, for I dreaded the thumping and bumping of the omnibus, steadily enough, and without attracting observation. How glad was I when the Rue Mazarin first broke upon my sight! And when I again beheld the

old house where I knew my dear mother was waiting to comfort and console me, I fairly burst into tears. This was the climax, and by the action I was so much relieved, that I mounted the stairs with something like a return of that calm and self-possession I had enjoyed but for a short space, indeed, since I had left home in the morning. All my weariness and depression seemed to be dispelled as the same soothing red light from the setting sun, as that which had greeted me on the evening before, shone through the staircase windows; and as I passed each landing-place I paused—in spite of my haste to regain the peace and quiet of our mansarde—to feast my eyes upon the well-remembered line of orange-coloured light which had so comforted me before. As I gradually reached the upper story of the house, I grew more subdued, and when at length I stood beneath the dingy skylight in the roof which lighted our own landing, I fancied I had reached at length the haven for which my soul had been sighing so long.

I crept slowly up the few remaining steps leading to our apartment. The door was standing open—a thing so contrary to my mother's reserved and retired habits, that the incident was in itself alone a source of uneasiness and wonder. It actually caused me to quicken my pace; but before I could enter the little ante-room, where our reading-lamp was already burning (another unwonted circumstance in the economy of our daily life), my mother herself appeared upon the threshold. Her countenance was unusually animated, and she spoke in a hurried tone, which betrayed the greatest excitement.

"Make haste, my darling!" exclaimed she, "we have been looking out for you with the greatest impatience. Babette has been twice to the end of the street to see if you were coming."

This greeting surprised me beyond measure. It seemed as if everything had changed as well as myself since I had left the house in the morning, and my temper was anything but soothed by this novel mode of salutation.

My dear mother's mind was evidently intensely preoccupied, for she did not even observe the complete prostration under which I was labouring. And as I was about to throw myself upon a chair she seized me by the arm.

"Nay, dearest, there is no time just now for either talk or rest. You must not even tarry to change your dusty suit. You have

been sent for, nay, sent for twice. What do you think?" Here she kissed me fervently on the forehead, but never observed how hot it was. "The story is too long to tell, for time presses," resumed she. "How strange are the ways of Providence! We need never despair; I always knew your talent would be appreciated some day or other, my darling, if once it could be known." And here she kissed me on the cheek and never perceived that it was flushed and heated to excess. But my stupefied and bewildered look must have struck her, nevertheless, for she added with something like a start, and drawing back to gaze more intently into my face:

"But, dear one, I forgot—you know nothing of what has happened. Well, then, see how Fate has been working for you! Just as Babette and I were beginning to expect you home and to prepare your supper, in rushed the boy from the colour-shop, screeching for you at the top of his voice to go immediately to his master for an order. The old lady who bought your beautiful picture last night had sent to the shop for you, to go that moment to take a likeness of some one who is to leave Paris by day-break to-morrow morning, and cannot wait. No sooner had the boy disappeared than old Nicol himself made his appearance in a towering rage, abusive as usual, against you for losing your time in the country, against me for having allowed it, and it was only by the assurance of your speedy return that I could induce him to depart. Scarcely had half an hour elapsed before he came once more, this time in a state of frenzy. 'The lady had sent again, the affair is pressing, that likeness *must* be taken to-night. What can that young scamp be doing in the woods after sunset? Just like beggars on horseback. But it serves me right. If I hadn't been so very free with my money last night he couldn't have left the studio.' And as, grown furious with his own words, he turned to leave the room, he added: 'Now mind, I will give the young scape-grace another half-hour,' and he pulled out the horrid big turnip watch he always carries, 'and if he is not with me then, ma foi, I must get another of old Rabâche's boys to execute the job. It's a pity, too; only a sketch to be done in black chalk, can be executed in a few minutes, and so well paid! A duchess into the bargain, with no end of patronage in perspective.'"

And then my mother hurried me into the kitchen, all perplexed and bewildered

as I still was, with eyelids drooping with fatigue and head racked with fever pains.

"Oh, mother, let me sleep!" exclaimed I, faintly, as I drew back towards the door of my own little bedroom. I had no power to utter more. The dear soul beheld in my repugnance to depart nothing more than a natural timidity, and urged me to hasten all the more; she tightened my cravat and brushed my hair. She sponged my forehead and slipped my Sunday paletôt over my soiled and stained blouse, while I was walking to and fro, literally reeling with sickness, and murmuring now and then as if in slumber.

"Oh, mother, do let me lie down and sleep, I dare not go to this place; mother dear, I cannot do what is required, I only want to sleep!"

Never shall I cease to wonder at the blindness evinced by my mother on this occasion. Maternal pride and maternal ambition must have been more powerful at that moment than even maternal tenderness, for my dear mother, at other times so anxious, so vigilant over the smallest indisposition, exaggerated even in her anticipations of evil, did not perceive that aught was amiss with me, that my brain was on fire, and that I could scarcely see. The dread of beholding her darling superseded in the luck which Fortune had thrown in his way had entirely absorbed every other feeling, and she literally pushed me out upon the stairs with a few gentle reproaches for my timidity, mended up by many kind words of encouragement, among which I remember still the prophecy that "my fortune had begun that night," and those words, so I have since been told, I repeated without ceasing for many days and many weeks afterwards.

I have no remembrance whatever of the visit to Nicol's shop, nor of the arrangement concerning the commission to be paid to him out of the job I was about to undertake, but I do remember the oval board and the box of chalks he placed in my hand to be used for the work. The address was in the Rue de Vaugirard, at the Hôtel Méréville. I scarcely know how I reached the place. I tottered rather than walked along the streets. Perhaps the fresh air of the night may have come once more to my relief, for as I lifted the huge knocker at the gate of the Hôtel Méréville, I succeeded in gathering together the scattered thoughts which had been chasing each other, as it were, over the surface of my brain, and by the time the gate was opened and I

had advanced to the vestibule, I fancied that my presence of mind was returning. It was evident that I had been waited for. The porter issued from his lodge the moment I appeared. He did not ask my name or inquire my business, but proceeded to light me up the stairs without the utterance of a single word. The vestibule was dark. The large globe lamps on each side of the entrance had not been lighted, but yet the unusual objects gathered at the foot of the stair could not fail to attract my attention. Huge rolls of black cloth and tressels, and strange-looking boxes, were gathered in unsightly heaps, indicative, as I thought, of that hurried departure on which such stress had been laid. The Hôtel Méréville is one of the oldest in the Rue de Vaugirard. Dark and gloomy perhaps, but grand and imposing in its aspect. The staircase up which I was ushered was sonorous and spacious; the tread of my footsteps seemed to bear a double echo, and their grating sound upon the stone irritated me beyond description. The walls were adorned with the pictures of gigantic size in vogue a couple of centuries ago, and the flame of the solitary light borne by my guide danced upon the canvas, making the personages represented thereon appear as if about to float out into space. Half-way up the stairs we were met by an elderly lady attired in deep mourning, with long trailing skirts and flowing veil, beneath whose folds the snow-white hair rippled and shone like molten silver. A small and delicate figure it was, yet evidently full of nerve and power, for she snatched the light from the porter's hand, and raised it to my face, as she said in a low, mysterious whisper:

"You are Monsieur Malabry," and in answer to my assenting bows, she added, "And I am the Duchesse de Méréville."

She paused, and then added in a murmuring tone while her breath seemed to catch between each word:

"Your instinct served you so well with the likeness of my dear Solange, that I thought you the best person for my poor Romuld."

The lamp was trembling in her hand, and the varying light it threw disclosed the changing shadows on the lady's face. Its agonised expression startled me so forcibly that it has remained engraven on my memory as the very realisation of utter despair, yet always as in connexion with the strange, mysterious dream of which, from the moment of my entrance into that

old mansion, I sometimes feel even now as if I had been the sport.

"Yes, I must be dreaming," thought I. "This is what folks call a trance. Who was Solange, whose portrait I have taken? Whose voice was this which spoke to me of Romuld?"

The lady spoke not again—at least not aloud; for although her lips moved, no sound was audible, and with a strange, impatient gesture she motioned to me to follow her. I did not even pause to inquire the meaning of all this, but obeyed with that mechanical obedience one experiences in a vision. The long black skirts of the lady's dress swept noiselessly over the floor as we traversed the apartment. They were of some woollen stuff—ample and flowing—passing over the marble pavement of the ante-room without the smallest sound. The veil of transparent crape clung around her head and shoulders, leaving the outline of her whole figure shadowy and undefined. She moved with slowness and precision, and the old blood of France was as visible in her haughty tread as in her proud features, where the eyebrows of jetty blackness, contrasting with the bandeaux of snow-white hair, gave an expression of strong, stern will to her whole countenance. We crossed the ante-room, mute and with gliding step. Our lengthened shadows on the wall seemed alone to be in motion. Had not my rack-ing headache still continued, I would have looked around with interest on the old family portraits which adorned the walls. But although in some degree relieved by the darkness, yet I still dwelt upon the idea of rest as the greatest blessing to be obtained.

We had passed thus through the dining-hall, marble-floored, lofty, and oak-panelled,—through the drawing-room, thickly carpeted and adorned with paintings let into the walls, amid such carving and gold embossing as future generations can never know. We arrived at a door covered with a heavy drapery of dark embroidered velvet, against which the outstretched hand of my conductress looked ghastly white. She was about to draw the drapery aside, when she turned abruptly round, and said to me in a sharp, thin voice:

"There is no need for me to enter the chamber. You will see your work at once. Nicol told you, doubtless, the circumstances under which you are called upon to execute the——"

She hesitated to find the word, and I

answered hastily: "Oh yes. I know. The gentleman is to depart to-morrow on a long journey. But—why cannot the portrait be delayed until his return?"

The lady started, and stared wildly into my face. She uttered a faint cry as of bitter pain; then, by a sudden movement, stepped aside, and her grasp of the curtain was so powerful that it was drawn aside by the movement, and I stood within the space between the two doors, which in these old houses of Paris separate the principal rooms from each other. The strangeness of the sight which burst upon me, and perhaps the sudden glare of light which greeted me, caused me also to reel backwards. I would have turned and fled, but the curtain had fallen behind me, and the lady was no more to be seen. The still and mournful dream, for it appeared so more than ever, amid which I was moving, seemed fast turning to nightmare; I gazed with mingled horror and amazement into the apartment before me. I stood transfixed, neither able to recede nor daring to advance. A powerful scent of many odours mixed together made me turn faint and sick—the strong perfume of violets, mingled with the nauseous vapour of heated wax, benumbing every sense, so that I felt as if my very reason were paralysed. The bed, contrary to our modern French custom, stood in the middle of the room. It was one of those large and solemn-looking baldaquin bedsteads, seldom seen except in the state apartments of old country châteaux. The heavy curtains of dark flowered tapestry were drawn aside, and all around the bed stood a row of lighted tapers in high silver sconces. Their flaming light, unsteady from the draught, seemed to rise and fall as it was thrown upon each object in turn, and not altogether bringing forward, as it were, the individual horrors of the scene one by one. Long flowing sheets were hung before the mirrors, and their ghastly whiteness contrasted with the dark hangings of the tapestry on the walls. A large fire was burning on the hearth, although the evening was so hot, and the ruddy flame of the huge logs upon the hearth danced upon the polished floor, and on every bright object in the room, making it now and then seem all aflame. Close by the chimney was seated, in a comfortable arm-chair, a priest, one of the lower order of ecclesiastics belonging to the nearest church, muttering, in a low monotonous tone, his prayers from the book he held at arm's length to catch the light from the

fire. At the foot of the bed stood a table covered with a snow-white damask cloth, on which was standing a high silver vase, and upon it lay the long-handled goupillon used for sprinkling the holy water. On one side of the bed was kneeling a chorister boy, with white surplice and huge black cape, who seemed, by his immovable attitude, to have fallen asleep, with his forehead buried in the heavy drapery of the bed-curtain. On the other side knelt a sister of charity, the long sleeves of her gown of black serge stretched out, and serving to detach the edges of her stiffened coif from the sheet on which her head was reposing, her head bent so low, indeed, that her features were undiscernible. And—what was it that lay beneath the coverlet? The outline of a human form was but too evident. The folds of the sheet seemed to stand up sharp and aggressive, as if to leave no doubt upon the dullest imagination of the presence of the corpse hidden beneath them! I saw it all—the mystery was mystery no more. I had been sent for to take the portrait of one whose approaching "departure," as described by old Nicol, was not for a journey, but for the grave.

I remember placing my hands before my eyes, as the consciousness of my awful mission burst upon me. I remember murmuring in a low tone, as I thought, and with a sigh drawn from the depths of my bosom, "'Tis plain, I am destined no more to dwell among the living; my place henceforth is to be ever with the dead."

I could not have spoken in so low a murmur as I had imagined, or was it that the silence of the death-chamber was so great that every sound could be heard? for at the sob which burst from me as I spoke the words the priest turned suddenly round, and the little chorister's face, all flushed and swollen, was raised, while a grey-headed domestic advanced with tottering pace from behind the curtains, where he had been concealed, towards me. All seemed startled at my appearance amongst them, all stared at me with amazement, all save the sister of charity, and she remained undisturbed, but went on telling her beads, while her extended arms moved not, and her snow-white cornette remained rigid and motionless upon the bed. The domestic spoke to me with a sad but courteous greeting. I know he did, for his mild blue eye was fixed upon me and his lips moved, but I heard no sound. He took me by the hand and drew me towards the bed. I re-

sisted and turned to fly, but, as I turned, there stood close behind me the spectral figure of the Duchesse de Méréville, who, with up-raised arm and gesture of command, signed to me with peremptory expression to advance. And I *did* move forward like a beaten hound, and took the seat which had been arranged for me at the bedside. For here, as well as below stairs, everything had been prepared for my arrival. The servant went round to the opposite side of the bed to that where I was seated. I dared not look upon the strange and awful model which had been provided for me, and I turned my gaze to the opposite wall. For a brief instant was the power of concentrating my ideas restored to me. All was deep and solemn mystery in the scene. There hung the picture of the girl with the dark red ribbon in her hair. My *poitrinaire* in a splendid frame surmounted with a wreath of immortelles, and I saw in an instant what was meant by my portrait of "Solange." The momentary diversion to my thoughts occasioned by the sight evidently must have delayed the catastrophe which had been impending over me ever since my first entrance into the mansion, for, after gazing on it intently, as though I now beheld it for the first time, I could collect myself sufficiently to unfold my drawing implements, and compel my courage to the horrible task required of me. The old servant stood by the pillow whereon lay the head of the corpse, and began slowly to raise the handkerchief which covered the face. His hand trembled so violently that the movement was slowly performed; so slowly, indeed, that the features of the dead man were disclosed one by one. And as the linen cloth was thus withdrawn by degrees, so did I feel my senses once more becoming gradually benumbed, frozen, as it were, beneath the icy chill of that overwhelming awe by which the very beating of my heart was stayed.

But strange to say I felt no surprise. As with the opium dreamer, that sentiment could exist no longer, and I started not, nor felt the slightest shock when, the handkerchief being wholly removed, the features of the youth I had beheld full of life in the early morning, dead before noon, were once more displayed in all their ghastly rigidity before me. Yes, there was the face, bearing still the same haughty, supercilious expression as in life, the same lank masses of chestnut hair lying all abroad upon the pillow just as they had floated round his face when his

head lay back against the lining of the coucou, the parted lips, and the half-closed eyelids were just as I had seen them during that fatal drive. I felt that I had been clutched in the cold implacable grasp of Fate, and struggled no more to free myself. The old servant, careful and officious, held the light close to the visage of the corpse, removing the crucifix which lay upon the breast with the wreath of violets to a greater distance, and asking for approval of the attention. But I could not speak, nor could I even make the sign of approbation he required, for my whole frame seemed turned to stone, and life itself to have centred in my burning brain. I drew the first strokes of the outline; they were true to nature, and I grew more bold, seeking to overcome, by the power of will, the horror and disgust with which my whole being was pervaded. My pencil dashed along valiantly, and although my hands had grown icy cold, and my eyes were beginning to see every object before me as through a veil, the likeness of the dead man gave gradual promise of becoming perfect.

It would seem as if even under the most trying circumstances there must be some peculiar interest attached to the progress of a picture; for after awhile I became conscious that the priest had left his prayers to lean over me; his head weighed heavily on my shoulder, and the odour of snuff and stale garlic, with which his garments were impregnated, was in itself sufficient to create the nausea, which never left me for months, and which even now is connected in my mind with the odour of violets. The little chorister had left his station by the bedside to come and crouch by my chair, leaning his whole weight upon my knees, and causing the drawing to slide forward every now and then from my grasp. The sister of charity alone remained faithful to her post, her head still bent low, and buried in the sheet, the beads of her rosary rattling between her long, thin fingers, and still breaking the hard, stiff outline of the figure on the bed with the outline, harder still, of the starched wings of her cornette. The breath of my two human burdens came hot and strong upon my face, and almost stifled me. I felt that my consciousness was again deserting me, and other images floating before my sight than those actually before me. I drew lines upon the paper here and there, I scarce knew how or where. Who was it whispered, "See, see, what is it he is drawing?" Who was it

answered, in a low whisper too, "Look, look, it is a fly! there—behold—he is drawing it again; why now—only see—he is drawing it once more. Just look—one—two—three, he is covering the board with them?" Who was it again who called out in a louder tone, "Nay, you are leaning over him too heavily; you prevent his very breathing—he will faint—give him air, for God's sake?" The exclamation recalled me to myself. I summoned all my courage to rid myself from the oppression of my obtrusive companions, and by a rough gesture made them both slide heavily to a distance along the polished floor. At that moment the brusque movement I had made must have caused the old man to start, for he suddenly brought the light close to the dead man's face, and there, upon the forehead—by all the powers of Heaven!—was the deadly bluebottle fly, which had pursued the murdered man with such mysterious and fiendish tenacity even unto death, nay, even beyond, for his very corpse was not suffered to remain in peace!

With the gesture of a madman I started to my feet, dashing my drawing to the floor, and rushing towards the bed, having no other thought, no other aim, than the extermination of the fiend I felt sure would follow the corpse down into the very grave. But the aged attendant, weak and dim-sighted as he was, had beheld it too, and with trembling hand was seeking to brush it reverently away. The shrill, wheezing noise, and the loud and angry buzz which had grown so familiar, yet so ominous to my ear, were heard once more. But this time the madness which had been smouldering all day, burst forth without restraint, beyond control. I leaped into the air, while an unearthly shriek, or rather yell, echoed through the apartment, and—so they have told me since—was followed by a tremendous oath, unholy at all times, but doubly so in its awful effect, uttered thus in the presence of the dead! An exclamation of agony burst from the lips of the priest, and a low cry of anguish from those of the sister of charity, aroused at last from her devotions by this apparent visitation of some unhallowed spirit. But the madness had declared itself, and was now beyond all human control, and I was utterly unconscious of the confusion and dismay of those around me seeking in vain to hold me down as I bounded, like one possessed, from one end of the room to the other, upsetting the tapers, and leaping over the furniture in chase of the bluebottle fly, whose flight

through every corner of the room could be traced by its loud and startled buzz, while I followed in pursuit, reckless of the destruction of every obstacle in my path, heedless of the loud crash of china and glass, of the terrified screams of those who witnessed the awful scene, urged onwards by the sole resolve to crush the obnoxious creature out of sight, at once and for ever, shrieking out as I rushed backwards and forwards from the door to the fireplace, from the window to the wall, in that insane, fantastic chase:

"Avaunt, thou fiend, to whom the life-blood itself is not sufficient prey! Canst thou not leave the dead to the devouring grave? Must thou dispute, with loud brazen trumpet, the right of the silent worm? Ah! thou shalt not escape this time. Help me, oh reverend father! Seize him, boy. Look, he is seeking to fly out by the window. Nay, see, he is now running along the head-gear of the sister of charity!"

I have remembrance of a heavy blow dealt with all the strength of my arm—of the cry of horror which echoed through the chamber as the sister sank to the floor—of the sensation of some living thing struggling within my fierce grip, and of the vivid pain which shot through my whole frame as it was crushed against my burning palm, as though I had seized the head of some monstrous snake, whose deadly fangs had fastened on my flesh—and I remember nothing more, save the wild triumphant laugh with which I fell backwards against the fender, and the sudden darkness that succeeded to the red and fiery glare which had seemed to envelop every object during the unearthly chase of the fly. The whole household had been aroused, and the whole apartment was filled with the servants, who came flocking from all parts of the mansion, terrified at the noise proceeding thus from the death-chamber. I was borne home, a raving maniac, to my mother; and so violent was the state of madness into which I had been thrown, that, by the doctor's stern command, I was conveyed to the hospital, as the worthy man, who had always been a friend of our family, declared that he could not be answerable for a patient in such a state, whose window on the fifth story looked out upon the pavement of the street.

And my mother wept sorrowfully, and, bowing her head, submitted to the decree. But she followed me, giving up her home and all her cherished household gods, so that if the power of recognition were ever

to be restored, her face might be the first to greet me. For more than forty days and nights did she watch me with unwearied care, and when the convalescence, worse than the disease, declared itself, she bore that, too, without a murmur. She has sat in a darkened room for days and weeks together, silent and motionless by my side, holding my hand in hers to quiet the fancy which had seized upon me that I was about to fall into the yawning precipice which, in spite of the utter obscurity, I could distinctly behold for ever opened at my feet. Had I not felt the warm and earnest pressure of her grasp, I should have fallen into the dark tide of despair—that dread follower of brain fever, more frightful than its wildest paroxysms. It was only during the rare intervals when I slept that she durst move from the painful torture to which my insane fury had condemned her. During the bitter trial of those weary days and nights her frame grew bent and aged, and her brow grew wrinkled before her time; yet her soul seemed steeped in a very bath of youth and sunshine, and she it was who brought back to me the hope and trust which of right should have been mine, but which, without her help, I should have lost for ever!

When my mother had thus snatched me from the jaws of the tomb, and the doctors had pronounced my cure a miracle, we left Paris for awhile, and lived in utter solitude in the country. I was happily free from any anxiety on the score of money, for the poor Duchesse de Méréville, who died just as I began to recover strength, left me a small sum to enable me to pursue my studies for a year, "without disquietude or anxiety as to the subject of his daily bread, not wishing," the poor lady said, "to make him a rich man, but a good painter." So I resumed my pencil and palette, and as memory brought back the events of my dread "holiday" at Meudon, so did Nature whisper again to me the secret she had confided to me beneath the White Thorn. My mother could easily understand why I would never venture on the painting of another portrait. The likeness of the dead Count de Sorgerac was the last I ever essayed to draw, and I feel that, were I to attempt another, that dead pale face would arise beneath my pencil. So that the study of landscape seemed to come as a natural consequence of the long country walks which brought back my health and strength, completing the cure my dear mother had

begun. My success—for I have been successful beyond my deserts—has been her reward.

CASTAWAY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "BLACK SHEEP," "WRACKED IN PORT," &c. &c.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER VI. MR. DELABOLE SHOWS HIS HAND.

EVERY two or three years, at greater or less intervals, there comes upon the City of London a something which may or may not be the precursor of a panic, but which, in itself, is a species of blight with very gloomy influences. It spreads from the highest to the lowest, from the magnates who meet in the Bank parlour, to settle the rate of discount, down to the copying clerks and the office lads at fifteen shillings a week. The brokers and jobbers come on 'Change earlier, and remain considerably later than usual; anxious telegrams, couched in mysterious language, flash to and fro between the metropolis and the great centres of commerce, the City editors of newspapers, mysterious men, whose ordinary communications to the journal by which they are employed are only made through their clerks, then appear in person, in the dingy penetralia of Fleet-street, and the intelligence which they convey is as carefully weighed and as jealously printed as the leakage of the deliberations of a cabinet.

Some such state of affairs exists at the present moment. See the roofs of the inward-bound suburban omnibuses, masses of waving newspaper broadsides, in which are buried the clerks who are devouring their contents; hear the hum which buzzes through every chop-house and tavern within a mile of the Royal Exchange; chop-houses and taverns, at this autumnal time of the year usually deserted, but now overflowing, as in high mid-winter, with a crowd of eating, drinking, talking guests. See the homeward-bound continental steamers and the London hurrying trains crammed with chairmen, directors, managers, secretaries, and staff, who have been away pleasure-seeking on their annual holiday, but are summoned back to duty by the first breath of the note of danger. See the one-eyed appearance of the houses in Belgravia and Tyburnia, to which the master has returned alone—leaving his family in the German gambling-place, on the Italian lake, or by the English seaboard—and where he shivers

amidst the holland-covered furniture of the gloomy dining-room, slips about in the carpetless bedroom, and tosses in the ill-made bed, "done for" by the fluffy female in charge of the house. See the chambers only half painted, and the lodgings with temporary denizens inducted into them, to the horror of the regular tenants who have unexpectedly returned. See the dreary days and long nights intended to have been spent in sketching-parties, and picnic-parties, and flirtations; on Swiss mountains; in looking on at the board of green cloth, and watching the spinning ball, or the shuffled cards; in bathing, and boating, and pleasure-taking generally; but now condemned to be passed over deeds and ledgers, in file biting and hair splitting, and wondering when the worst will come, and how it is to be met.

The Bank rate of discount has gone up two per cent, money is tight, and several old-established houses are declared to be "cranky." As for the new companies, which came into notice two years ago, in the first blush of the "promoting" period, eight or nine of them have gone already. Little Mr. Grimmer, the celebrated bankruptcy attorney, now staying down at Margate, where he has taken a house on the Fort, and where his phaeton and pair are the admiration of the neighbourhood, reads the money article of the evening paper with infinite gusto, and instructs his youngest daughter, whom he idolises, to mix him another glass of whisky-and-water, to which a portion of the news he re-peruses as he drinks it adds a lemony flavour. No need for Mr. Grimmer to hurry up to town yet: his clerks know when his presence is required, and can summon him by telegraph. Meanwhile let him ozonise his wiry little body as much as possible, and rest his busy brain. There will be plenty of work for him when Term begins in November, when, in the Bankruptcy Court, the "judges are met—a terrible show"—and when "dividend deferred," and "applications to register," "trustees' releases," and all the jargon of the court shall mean costs, and costs, and costs, all to be added by Mr. Grimmer to the heap already put away in store for the sole benefit of his bright-eyed little daughter.

Amidst the smashes which were resounding on every side no harm had yet come to the Terra del Fuegos Mining Company. Several apparently flourishing speculations, originally promoted by Philip Vane, and to the floating of which Mr.

Delabole had lent a hand, had gone to unutterable grief. These two worthies had long since seceded from them, and their places had been filled by men of minor capacity and considerably less courage. Men who potted when they ought to have struck, and struck when they ought to have delayed; inferior beings, whose fate was dismissed by Mr. Delabole with a shoulder-shrug, and by Mr. Vane with a contemptuous oath. But the Terra del Fuegos stood firm at a time when every public company in London was under the harrow of discussion, and, so far as possible, examination. It may be imagined that it did not escape its share of censorious gossip. Clerks will talk; even such intensely respectable men as those, old and young, employed under Mr. Vane. What the clerks said was merely this. That whereas the letters and reports from the mines, after having been read by the general manager and the board, were usually sent into the outer office to be copied, those recently received had been detained by the general manager. On its being further debated amongst the clerks whether these reports had been submitted to the directors or read and bottled by the "Toff" and "Pod," names by which Mr. Vane and Mr. Delabole were distinguished by their subordinates, the question being put to the vote, it was carried by a majority that the reports had been read and bottled by the said T. and P. It is further noticed by the employes that the "Pod" had been away from London for a fortnight, and that the "Toff" who had returned from his short holiday, and was on duty again, had been constantly in receipt of telegrams, which scarcely seemed to improve his temper.

But there were other signs of coming squalls which the respectable clerks did not notice, but to which the initiated might well pay attention. Little Mr. Naseby, for the first time in his life, drove down to the City offices of the company, in which he held so large a stake. He asked for Mr. Delabole, but, in that gentleman's absence, was ushered in to Mr. Philip Vane. His manner was wearied and languid, soft and sybaritic as usual; but the questions he put to the general manager were keen and probing. Mr. Vane had seen Mr. Naseby before, knew that he enjoyed Delabole's confidence, knew also that he was a perfumer in Bond-street. Dissatisfied with Delabole for the moment, and with Mrs. Bendixen's immediately - to - be - touched sixty thousand pounds before his eyes, Philip Vane thought

fit to snub Mr. Naseby, and to reply, first vaguely, and then insolently, to the queries put to him. Nothing could be better bred than the little perfumer's manner; a short dry cough was his strongest deprecation of the treatment which he received. He bowed himself out politely, and took off his hat to the clerks generally as he passed through the outer office. But on his way to the West End he stopped his brougham in Throgmorton-street, and instructed his brokers, Messrs. Bullen and Baren, to sell out every share he possessed in the Terra del Fuegos Silver Mining Company.

Mr. Parkinson, of Thavies Inn, was also considerably disquieted at the aspect of affairs, and the government office clerks and the financially hampered barristers who attended at his chambers for the purpose of money-borrowing, found him more than ever astonished at the nature of their requests, and more than ever disinclined, as they phrased it, "to part." Mr. Parkinson, knowing himself to be a vulgar, weak, and irritable man, wisely refrained from visiting the City office, where Philip Vane would, he was perfectly certain, have probed each of his tenderest sores, and probably exasperated him into committing himself. But he found means of communicating with Mr. Delabole, with whom he had an intimate acquaintance of many years' standing, and the replies which he received from that gentleman, though short, were so extremely irritating, that Mrs. Parkinson expressed herself roundly on his domestic bearing, and even the vicar hinted that his churchwarden was more prompt to anger than he had supposed. And there were other directors and shareholders who, many personally and some by letter, were worrying the office to know how matters stood, and asking for information which was in no degree imparted to them.

All this time Philip Vane was to be found at his post, attending to business with the greatest regularity, seeing everybody who desired admittance to him, and saying to each and all of them as little as possible. From the hour of his initiation into a high City position, he had dropped his soft, specious, pleasant manner, and adopted a sharp, curt tone, partly because he thought it was business-like, partly to save time, which now was really valuable to him. But since this gloom had settled down upon the financial world, his tone had become more curt than ever. He returned the briefest answers to all questions put to him, and when any visitors were shown in to

him, invariably stood up, that the new comers might not have any excuse for sitting down.

"Good morning," he echoed, on the tenth day of the pressure, after a fussy old retired admiral, who had just taken his leave, "and be hanged to you," he added, as he saw the door safely close. "That's the fifth man I have seen during the quarter of an hour I have been here, and I have not had time to look at my letters yet." He sat down at his desk and began rapidly sorting into two divisions the large mass of papers which lay upon it. The larger of these two divisions he sent into the outer office by a clerk summoned for the purpose, while he ran his eye again over the smaller ones, and selected therefrom one letter for immediate perusal. It was very short, but its contents seemed to be satisfactory. "At last," he muttered, as he placed the letter carefully in the breast-pocket of his coat, "at last I am to obtain a little relief from this perpetual wear and tear of body and soul. He is coming back to-morrow, he says, and I shall put it plainly to him at once that my marriage must be no longer postponed, no matter what might be the consequences. He will oppose it, I know that, urging as his reason the panic and the dubious information last received from the mines, but I am determined not to be put off any longer. In—I was going to say in gratitude to him, but I do not think there is much of that in my composition—in deference to his wishes, that's a better phrase, I have postponed it two or three times, partly because he has undoubtedly done me many good turns, and may have the opportunity of doing me many more, and partly because he has, or had, strong influence with Mrs. Bendixen, which he might have used against me. If, however, I judge women rightly—and I ought to be able to, if experience is of any use in such matters—from what I have noticed of the widow during the last few days, I may safely pit myself against that or any other influence. There is no question of giving me up, the boot is on the other leg, by George; all she seems afraid of is of losing me. Wonderful how extraordinary attentive, and all that kind of thing, she has been since she came back from the Isle of Wight; never seems to like to let me out of her sight, and remains in London during all this beastly muggy weather for the mere sake of seeing me every day. Odd, but gratifying—uncommonly gratifying." And, from the mere

force of habit, Mr. Vane opened a drawer in his desk, and took from it a hand-mirror, into which he looked for some moments at the bright black eyes, and the sound pearly teeth, and the close-cut beard, which had worked so potent a charm.

"Yes," he added, as he replaced the glass and closed the drawer, "I think I could defy my friend Delabole, if there were to come any split between us. He might counsel the widow, but I should carry her off. She would thank him; she would cling to me. With the chances before me, I will defy any one in the world, except——" And a cold shiver ran through him as the thought passed across his brain—"except that parson at Springside. I have contrived to keep the thought of that cursed fellow, and all he said, well under, but it will surge up from time to time. Yes, if he were quieted I should be perfectly safe; for Madge, beyond confessing it to him, has evidently neither the application nor the inclination to take any further steps. Perhaps she does not even know anything about my intended marriage. This man Drage learned it doubtless from that infernal paragraph in the paper; but Madge never used to read any papers except the Haresfoot, and it would scarcely be in that. I wonder," he thought to himself, leaning back in his chair dreamily, and plunging his hands into his pockets, "where Madge is and what she is doing! I never could see her name in any London playbill, or hear of any one at all resembling her. How did this parson come to know her? How did he become so intimate with her that she should confide to him that great secret? He may be the chaplain of some hospital, and she may have told him when she was very ill! Perhaps she's dead! I never thought of that." And for the first time since his separation from her, Philip Vane had a kindly recollection of the young wife whom he had deserted years ago.

He was roused from his reverie by a rap at the door, followed by the entrance of a clerk, who laid a card upon the table, and was bidden to usher the visitor in. The visitor when he entered happened to be Doctor Asprey, dressed, as usual, with scrupulous care, soft, bland, and placid. The clerk placed a chair for Doctor Asprey, who was not one of those clients whom the general manager received standing. Even if the doctor had not been, as he was, an intimate and constant visitor at the office, he was not the style of man whom one could have treated with such impertinence.

"And what brings you into the City to-day, Doctor Asprey," asked Philip Vane, when they had exchanged salutations, "after being so recently here? You are not one of those gobemouches who come down to pick up rumours that they may repeat at evening-paper time in their clubs, nor are you 'our own artist,' commissioned to sketch the scene of the panic for one of the illustrated journals."

"No," said the doctor, with a quiet smile, "I do not aspire to any such high position. I simply looked in to know if you had heard anything of Delabole; if you had any precise information as to the date of his return."

"I had a letter from him this morning," replied Vane, "in which he says he shall be back without fail to-morrow."

"To-morrow, good," said the doctor, with the slightest manifestation of relief at the intelligence. "I am glad to hear it, but I should not have come into the City on purpose, even to make this inquiry. The fact is, I was summoned down to a very special meeting of the board of the insurance office opposite, the Friendly Grasp, to which I am consulting physician. An awkward business; a widow has made claim for seven thousand pounds, the sum for which her husband was insured."

"There is nothing strange in that surely, my dear doctor," said Philip Vane, smiling.

"Nothing at all," said the doctor. "One noticeable feature in the case is, that the directors know that the man was poisoned, but there is nothing particularly strange in that."

"Know he was poisoned! They suspect so, you mean."

"They know it, my dear sir. I know it. I am as morally certain of it as I am that you are talking to me now."

"And whom do they imagine to be the murderer?"

"The widow," said the doctor, quietly, "and an accomplice, a young man, a general practitioner, whom, it is said, she is about to marry."

"The insurance office will fight the case, of course?" asked Vane.

"I think not. I strongly counselled them not, as it is comparatively a young office; and I strongly advised them to wait for some future case before coming before the public with a prosecution."

"Some future case! Do you mean to say these things are of common occurrence?"

"My good sir, there are hundreds of

cases every year in which men and women are murdered, and of which nothing is known. I would undertake to kill you with a poison of which no trace should ever be discovered, to stab you in a vital part, so that you should die instantly, and there should scarcely be a drop of blood to tell where you had been hit. My dear Mr. Vane, I am horrifying you with my professional talk. You look positively unnerved."

"Not at all," stammered Philip Vane. "I am intensely interested. Pray continue. You were saying that——"

"Not another word to-day," said the doctor, rising. "I must run off; I must, indeed. I shall see you to-morrow, when I look in to talk to Delabole. Now, adieu." He shook hands politely, but formally, with the general manager, and took his departure.

And Mr. Philip Vane remained for an hour motionless, passive, and chewing the cud of the reflections which Doctor Asprey's words had aroused in his mind.

The next day Mr. Delabole arrived at the office. The very sight of him inspired the clerks, and such of the public as were doing business in the outer office, with hope and comfort. His eyes were bright, his cheeks flushed with health, his manner jaunty. His diamond rings blazed as he waved his fat, white, little hand in courteous acknowledgment of his subordinates' greeting. The hall-porter essayed to precede him, but Mr. Delabole was much too quick for the plethoric functionary, and made his own way into the general manager's room, into which he passed, after a sharp decisive rap.

Philip Vane was seated at his desk, up to his elbows in an accumulated mass of paper. The sight seemed to afford Mr. Delabole some amusement, as he burst into a low but very hearty laugh at once.

"Hallo!" said Vane, looking up from his work, "it is you, is it; the prodigal returned? Glad you seem amused. You would have found it anything but a laughing matter if you had been here. It has been all very fine for you, spending your substance in riotous living, but deuced hard lines for us who have had to champ away at these husks," pointing to the papers, "which the swine refused to swallow."

"How charmingly scriptural and poetic is the dear boy in his illustrations," murmured Mr. Delabole. "Yes, Philip, I have returned!"

"Not before it was time," growled Mr. Vane.

"Exactly, but not after; in the very nick."

"I am glad you think so," said Vane, gloomily. "But you were not beforehand, you will at least acknowledge, when you have read this." And he handed a note across the table.

"Naseby—resigns directorship, no longer qualified—has sold shares. I was aware of this; I received this news by telegram the night before last. Hence my letter to you of yesterday—my return to-day."

"Oh! then you do feel it of importance. I am glad to think you are impressed with the facts. From the first blush of your manner you appeared to me determined to carry everything off with a high hand."

"My dear friend Vane, I am always impressible by facts, and what you mean by carrying off matters with a high hand, is simply that I keep my wits about me, and am not downcast by trifles."

"The rats are leaving the sinking ship," said Vane, sententiously, pointing to the letter.

"A very inapt illustration," retorted Delabole. "In the first place, the ship is not sinking; in the second, this particular rat was hunted out of it through a mistake of the officer left in charge."

"You are alluding to me?" asked Philip Vane, flushing with rage.

"I am alluding to you, my dear Philip," replied Delabole, quietly, "and to no one else. Naseby came here for certain information. He is a wealthy but pompous little man; you ignored his wealth, and insulted his pomposity by your—pardon me, my dear Philip, I have not the advantages of your education, and can find no other word for it—by your misplaced 'cheek;' he retired in dudgeon, and threw up the whole concern."

"That's his version of the case, and——"

"That is my common-sense view of it. But there is no reason that it should form a cause of argument between us, as there are hundreds of other Nasebys, or equivalents to Naseby, in the world. All that we have to do is to get hold of them at once."

"Yes, that is all," said Philip Vane, with a sneer, "but is it easy?"

"Yes, it is not difficult, provided proper means are taken," said Mr. Delabole. "We must, all of us, throw ourselves heart and soul into the breach, and work our utmost until we have accomplished our ends."

"Yes," said Philip Vane. "It is well for you, who have just returned from a fortnight's holiday, to talk about working

your utmost, but I confess I am not able to second that admirable proposition. I have already twice postponed my marriage for your convenience, and I was only awaiting your return to fix an immediate day, and arrange for absenting myself from the City for some little time."

"I am greatly afraid, my dear Vane," said Mr. Delabole, firmly, but with perfect calmness, "that that cannot be."

"Cannot be!" repeated Vane, starting from his chair. "And why not?"

"Because," said Delabole, still calmly, "because the business of the office will not permit it."

"Business of the office be d——d!" said Vane, savagely. "What business is there that presses for which I am specially required?"

"A little matter involving peculiar nicety of handling," said Mr. Delabole, rising from his seat. "No one there," he continued, closing the door after he had opened it suddenly and looked out. "It is well to be particular both as regards eye-shot and ear-shot in these matters," he added, poking the escutcheon of the lock over the keyhole with his stick. "I see from the letter you sent me that our further application to Sir Geoffry Heriot has been fruitless and that he still refuses to sign the deed."

"That's so."

"In this crisis," said Mr. Delabole, "Irving's co-operation would be invaluable to us."

"That co-operation we shall never get."

"Unless Sir Geoffry gives us his signature," said Mr. Delabole, looking straight into the air before him, and playing with his watch-chain.

"He is a hard, inflexible man," said Philip Vane. "He will never give in!"

"Then," said Mr. Delabole, slowly, and with his eyes still in the air, "we must get somebody to get his signature for us."

"And that somebody——?"

"That somebody is you, my dear Philip," said Mr. Delabole, fixing his eyes on Vane's face, and pointing straight at him with his forefinger.

"I!" cried Vane, loudly; then lowering his voice in deference to a gesture from his companion, he added: "Do you think you will get me to do this job for you?"

"I am perfectly certain of it," retorted Delabole.

"You must bring some very special influence to bear upon me," said Vane, with a sneer.

"I intend to."

"May I ask what it is?"

"If you do, I answer you plainly. The loss of Mrs. Bendixen and her sixty thousand pounds."

"You overrate your influence in that quarter, my good sir," said Philip Vane, with a sigh of relief.

"It is not my influence, my good sir, but the influence of the law; the influence of the parish register of Chepstow Church, of Margaret Pierrepont, your wife, the actress whom you went down to see by stealth at Wexeter, and whom I went down to see too; whose life I have tracked backward and forward, and whose life's history I have at my tongue's end. Do you wish further personal evidences? Shall I ring the bell for Gillman, whom I employed to work the case out for me, or do you acknowledge the authenticity of my information?"

"I acknowledge it," said Philip Vane, faintly, "and will do what you require."

"Exactly," said Mr. Delabole, cheerfully. "We will discuss the matter later. Now, if you please, I will look through the minutes and see what has been going on while I have been away. Mr. Packham," he called out, putting his head into the outer office, "be good enough to bring the current minute-book."

The clerk speedily came with the minute-book and read out many entries to Delabole. But Philip Vane did not pay much attention to that proceeding. He was entirely engrossed in thinking over what Doctor Asprey had said to him that morning.

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LETTERS ILLUSTRATING THE ABOVE FACTS.

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OF FACTS

I & II.

1. [From Miss HESSEL, Richmond-place, Kingswood-hill, Bristol.]

"We have great satisfaction in our machine. For the beauty of its work, and its ease in use, it is *invaluable*. We could not desire a better in any respect."

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Letters illustrating foregoing Facts.

ILLUSTRATIVE
OF FACTS
I. & II.

2. [From the Rev. WILLIAM PLOWS, Burnham Parsonage,
Thetford.] July 3rd, 1871.

"Sirs,—I cannot express the great satisfaction that we have had in the trial of your sewing machine. So easy is it in the 'trial,' that even I myself could not fail in my attempt to use it, and its several appliances."

FACTS
I. II. & IV.

3. [From ARTHUR KINGSWELL, Esq., Sonning] Feb. 7th, 1871.

"We have all been surprised to find how easily the machine has been acquired. . . . The great simplicity, excellence, and ingenuity of this sewing machine are thoroughly appreciated. . . . I shall look forward with much pleasure to recommending it to my friends hereabouts, who have been occupied with machines very inferior to yours."

FACTS
III. & VI.

4. [From Mrs. STURGESS, Newport, Salop.] Nov. 21st, 1871.

"I have two of your machines constantly in use, and can speak in the highest terms of them. I never find them out of temper; always ready to work, and to do it well."

FACTS
I. II. III. & V.

5. [From Mr. HEPPELL, North Buckbun, Howden, Darlington.]

"We have had one of your machines for the last two and a half years and upwards, during which time it has done all kinds of work, from the finest muslin to very stout patent leather, with the greatest ease and satisfaction, without any mishap—not even a broken needle. It has never dropt a stitch (except once, when the needle got bent), never once refused to work, never needed any repairs whatever, and is as good now (after doing no end of work) as when we got it; all it has needed has been oiling and cleaning. Several of my friends have got one since they saw ours, and like them extremely. It is truly wonderful to see such simple machines accomplish so much, doing it with such ease, and so beautifully."

Dec. 5th, 1871.

FACTS
II. & VI.

6. [From Mrs. WALL, Grant-street, Wellmore.] Nov. 8th, 1871.

"We are all pleased with the machine; the advantage possesses for family use over the lock-stitch, as mentioned by in your advertisement, we have found to be perfectly correct."

FACT
II.

7. [From Dr. BELCHER, 12, Pavilion-parade, Brighton.]

"Herewith I inclose you a cheque for the sewing machine, and have much pleasure in informing you it answers admirably, so much so that I shall feel much pleasure in recommending them to my friends and patients."

Sept. 12th, 1871.

FACTS
III. & VI.

8. [From Mr. SCHRÖDER, Knoll Cottage, Tonbridge.]

"I have now had your machine in constant use since June, and its work is *always* most satisfactory. I think it without doubt the most perfect and pleasant machine made."

Nov. 27th, 1871.

FACTS
II. & IV.

9. [From Mr. J. S. DALE, Stockton-on-Tees.] July 3rd, 1871.

"The machine . . . gives satisfaction; I can work it well, without more instruction than that in the book."